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Comparative Religion Notes.

The Revue de l'Histoire des Religions.—This journal, appearing bi-monthly, is the leading organ of Comparative Religion in the world. It is published in Paris by Leroux, under the able editorship of M. Jean Reville, who has the admirable editorial quality of being able to bring together many writers of diverse shades of opinion in the pages of his *Revue*. Its attitude is severely scientific, and hence by some has been pronounced rationalistic. The accusation is in part true, in that the *Revue* does not take sides or represent any one phase or element of religious belief. Its point of view is that of inquiry rather than that of apologetic. There is no doubt, also, that much has appeared in its pages antagonistic to orthodox Christianity. The editorial direction is, however, apparently influenced by the desire to be broad, fair, and scholarly. The advantages offered for the conduct of such a journal in Paris are simply unparalleled. The magnificent Musée Guimet devoted to religion, the learned societies meeting in and about that city, the great university and other schools, afford a body of material and a stimulus to production and investigation which is unequalled. We gather from some recent numbers of the *Revue* a few of the interesting and important facts which they contain, respecting recent research in the field of religious history and life.

Immortality of the Soul in Ancient Syria.—The excavations of the Germans in Upper Syria, at Sendjirli, have yielded some valuable returns of linguistic and religio-historical knowledge. In one of the oldest inscriptions found is an important statement respecting the belief in the immortality of the soul. The inscription is written on a robe of a statue of the god Hadad, and is dated by scholars in the eighth or ninth century B.C. In it the King Panammou I. adjures his descendants to offer a special libation, at the moment of their coronation, over and above the usual sacrifices in honor of the god Hadad. "When my name has been pronounced and the formula recited, viz., 'The soul of Panammou may it drink with thee,' then the soul of Panammou will drink with thee. But he who shall neglect the funerary ceremony shall see his sacrifice rejected by Hadad, and the soul of Panammou will drink with Hadad alone." M. Halevy attaches great importance to this text because he has always maintained that the ancient Semites believed in the immortality of the soul. One always thinks of the Old Testament reticence on this point, and wonders as to its meaning. This fact, if substantiated, only adds to the mystery.

The Parliament's Programme from a European Standpoint.—Count Goblet d'Alviella, writing before the holding of the Parliament of Religions, makes some remarks in the *Revue* upon the programme and the probable outcome

of the Parliament. "It is difficult to tell what will be the result of such a gathering. But it is much gained to have united the representatives of five or six churches, from Catholic bishops to Unitarian clergymen, and a rabbi, in the preparation of such a programme. It is a fact which is of prime importance in proof of the religious toleration of the United States."

"Two omissions in that vast programme will be noticed. There is first the want of any exposition of religious conceptions respecting the origin of evil. This is because American religion is essentially optimistic. It prefers to apply itself to healing wounds, rather than to speculating over their *raison d'être*. Another point which is hardly touched upon in the twelfth conference devoted to the relations of religion to civil society, is the complex and burning question in the old world, the conflict between church and state. It is probable that here, also, the reason lies in an element of society peculiar to America, the absence of an established church."

Philo and the Avesta.—One would hardly think of finding any connection between the ideas of the "Bible of Zoroaster" and the thinker of Alexandria. But this is precisely what M. Darmesteter, the eminent translator of the Avesta, claims to have traced. He is satisfied that the Avesta took its shape during the three first centuries of our era, from Vologèse I. to Sapor I. The most ancient part of the Avesta, the Gathas, shows in its doctrines the influence of neo-Platonism. According to the *Bundahish*, the material creation was preceded by a purely ideal creation of the world, which lasted three thousand years before taking the material form. The *Bundahish*, though it dates from the Arabian era, rest on a *Nask* of the Avesta, the *Damdât*, which is proved by the analysis given of it by the Dinkart, to contain the same doctrine. A fragment of the *Damdât* has come down which puts the matter beyond doubt. But this theory of the intelligible universe is only the doctrine of platonic "ideas" applied to a cosmogony. Philo had made the same application. He teaches that God, wishing to create the material world, commences by creating the intelligible world as a model. The Avesta sets just below the God *Ahura*, a genius named *Vohu Manô*, "the good thought," which is nothing but the divine thought, the first creation of *Ahura*, his instrument in the creation of the rest of the world. He also represents humanity, and gives his name to the ideal man. He is the mediator of the divine revelation to man, and the intercessor for man before God. Now, all those characteristics are assigned by Philo to the *Logos*, first-born of God, intercessor and mediator between God and man. *Vohu Manô* is the first of those personified abstractions, called by the name of *Amshaspands*, who like him and with him unite, under *Ahura*, in the creation and government of the world. They are six in number. Philo also places between God and the world six abstractions, of which the *Logos* is the first; the third is the "royal power," which corresponds literally to the third Amshaspand, *Khshathra Vairya*, "the genius of his government." The other powers do not correspond with the Avestan list, a fact

which forbids attributing to the above striking resemblance a special historical significance. Still the relation is not accidental. It proves the community of atmosphere in which Philo and the author of the Gathas move. It is already the gnostic atmosphere; the Gathas are the first monument of gnosticism, but of a gnosticism of practical moral aims.

Naville's Work at Bubastis—Its Religious Value.—On the gateway leading into the so-called Festival Hall of the great temple of Bubastis, in Egypt, stands a series of important representations of a great religious ceremony which took place in the twenty-second year of the reign of Osorkon II., of the twenty-second dynasty. This has been discovered by M. Naville, of Geneva, and forms the subject of a memoir in the Egypt Exploration fund series. The significance of the scene is that it represents a ceremony which called together the representatives of the local cults from all parts of Egypt, and even from Ethiopia. It affords opportunity for a study of the religious forms which Egypt maintained. Some curious things appear therein, viz., the resemblance of certain of the religious practices to those of the Chinese, the similar reverence paid to the Emperor of China, the "son of heaven," and to the Pharaoh, the "son of the sun." Other interesting figures are those of the dwarfs from Ethiopia, of whom in later years Mr. Stanley has brought us information.

M. Amélineau, in his discussion of these pictures, calls attention to the fact that they show clearly that the ceremonial is a very early one, and that in it the cult of animals has been carefully maintained. We ascribe this to the principle that the older a rite is, the more sedulously it is preserved and the less susceptible of profanation. From the representations here given, it would seem that the beliefs of Egypt were immersed in fetishism or just emerging from it, for the heliopolitan Ennead, the theban Triad, and the monotheism of the philosophers find little or no place in them. Yet we know that the Ennead was accepted twenty centuries previously, the Triad about ten, and the hymn of Boulak was written some six centuries before. M. Amélineau then adds a very valuable caution against estimating the religious progress of a people from the religious representations graven on temples, or from the pompous celebrations of the worship. There are official observances and personal beliefs. Egypt, for example, in the former has made slow progress; in the latter she outstripped humanity in the highest conceptions of her theodicy and in religious ideas which we can hardly believe were held eighteen centuries before our era.

Progress of Religious Ideas in Ancient Egypt.—It is a common notion, held also in high quarters, that religion in Egypt was unprogressive. M. Amélineau, in his review of M. Naville's work at Bubastis, was inclined to trace this notion to the false method of depending entirely upon the pictured representations and religious worship rather than on the evidence of literature. He has also published a lecture, in which he traces the evolution of Egyptian

religion from primitive fetishism to the spiritual monotheism. He maintains that the history of Egyptian civilization, religion, and morals reveal a continuous progress in their spiritual development, while he acknowledges at the same time that the people preserved a large number of their primitive superstitions. He also seeks to prove that Egypt was no isolated land, but exercised a preponderating influence on surrounding and succeeding civilization, especially on Christianity. In this thesis few will follow him, thinks M. Reville, for it was after the material furnished by the theology and philosophy of Egypt had been melted in the crucible of the Greek spirit, under the fiery breath of the Jewish faith, that it was fitted to influence Christian society and civilization. M. Amélineau's essay is entitled *Les Idées sur Dieu dans l'ancienne Egypte* (Paris: Faivre et Teillard).

Human Sacrifices in our Day.—A ghastly account of the custom of human sacrifice in our own time has come from Siberia. Among the Tchouktchis the custom is for the aged and the sick, deprived of the joy of life, to end their days by offering themselves up to sacrifice, thereby rejoining their dead relatives and increasing the number of benevolent spirits. Having determined on death, one of the tribe at once informs his relatives and neighbors. As the news spreads his friends come to him beseeching him to give over his purpose. But they plead in vain, for he displays his reasons and tells of the life to come, and of the dead who have appeared to him in his sleeping and waking hours and called him to them. The friends therefore withdraw to make the necessary preparations, returning in about ten or twelve days with white grave clothes, weapons to serve in warding off evil spirits and hunting the reindeer in the other world. After arraying himself, the victim retires to a corner of his hut, and his nearest kinsman takes his place beside him, armed with the instrument of sacrifice, a knife, a lance, or a cord. The victim chooses the particular weapon, and at a signal given by himself, while his friends hold his arms, the deed is done. The knife is plunged into his breast, or he is thrown onto the lance, or two kinsmen draw tight the cord about his neck. After death the assistants approach, cover their faces and hands with his blood, and carry him on a sledge drawn by reindeer to the place of burial. There the reindeer are killed, the clothes of the dead removed and torn into pieces, and the dead body placed on a funeral pile. During the cremation the associates address their prayers to the blessed one and beseech him to watch over them and theirs.